

GOD'S THOUGHTS OF PEACE, AND OUR EXPECTED END

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A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MAY 29, 1887,
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*"For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the Lord,
thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end."
Jeremiah 29:11.*

I HAVE already explained to you, while expounding the twenty-fourth and twenty-ninth chapters of this prophet that these words were written by Jeremiah in a letter to the captives in Babylon. A considerable part of the people of Israel was carried away by Nebuchadnezzar into a far country. They were exhorted by the prophet to build houses, form families, and to abide peaceably there till the Lord should lead them back at the end of seventy years. But at that time there was a general uneasy feeling among the Jews and other subjected nations, who did not rest quietly under the iron yoke of Babylon. They were plotting and planning continual rebellions, and certain false prophets in Babylon worked with them, stirring up the spirit of revolt among the exiles. Jeremiah, on the other hand, assured them that they had been sent of God into the land of the Chaldeans for good, bade them seek the peace of the city wherein they now dwelt, and promised them that in due time the Lord would again plant them in their own land.

A people in such a position as the Jews in Babylon were in danger in two ways; either to be buoyed up with false hopes, and so to fall into foolish expectations, or to fall into despair, and have no hope at all, and so become a sullen and degraded race, who would be unfit for restoration, and unable to play the part which God ordained for them in the history of mankind. The prophet had the double duty of putting down their false hopes, and sustaining their right expectations. He, therefore, plainly warned them against expecting more than God had promised and he awakened them to look for the fulfillment of what He had promised. Read the tenth verse, and note that pleasant expression, "and perform My good word unto you." At the present time the church has need of both admonitions. Expectations which are not warranted are being raised in many quarters, and are leading to serious delusions. We hear men crying, "Lo here!" and "Lo there!" This wonder and that marvel are cried up. It would seem that the age of miracles has returned to certain hot heads. Take no heed of all this. Go not beyond the record. On the other hand, we need to be urged to believe our Lord implicitly, and to hold on to His word with a strong, hearty, realizing faith, being assured that while God will *not* do what we propose to Him, yet He will do what He has promised. False prophets will be left in the lurch, but the word of the Lord will stand.

This morning my desire shall be to comfort any of God's people who are in a state of perplexity, and thus are carried away captive. I would assure them of the Lord's kindness to them, and urge them to trust and not be afraid. God's thoughts towards them are good, though their trials may be grievous.

The text puts me upon two tracks. First, let us *consider the Lord's thoughts towards His people*. "I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end." Secondly, let us *consider the believer's proper attitude towards his Lord*. What should we think of our gracious God who thus unveils His heart to us?

I. First, then, dear friends, CONSIDER THE LORD'S THOUGHTS TOWARDS HIS PEOPLE.

It is noteworthy, first of all, that *He does think of them, and towards them*. Observe that this Scripture says not, "I know the thoughts that I *have thought* toward you." That would be a happy remembrance, for the thoughts of God concerning His people are more ancient than the everlasting hills. There never was a time when God did not think upon His people for good. He says, "I have loved you with an

everlasting love, therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn you." But the point here brought forward is, that *He still thinks of them*. It would be possible for you to have thought out a plan of kindness towards a friend, and you might have so arranged it that it would henceforth be a natural fountain of good to him without your thinking any more about it, but that is not after the method of God. His eyes and His hands are towards His people continually. It is true He did so think of us that He has arranged everything about us, and provided for every need, and against every danger, but yet He has not ceased to think of us. His infinite mind, whose thoughts are as high above our thoughts as the heavens are above the earth, continues to exercise itself about us. "I am poor and needy," says David, "yet the Lord thinks upon me." We love to be thought of by our friends; indeed, thought enters into the essence of love. Delight yourselves this morning, O you who believe your God, in this heavenly fact, that the Lord thinks upon you at this moment. "The Lord has been mindful of us," and He is still mindful of us.

The Lord not only thinks *of* you, but *towards* you. His thoughts are all drifting your way. This is the way the south wind of His thoughts of peace is moving; it is towards you. The Lord never forgets His own, for He has engraved them upon the palms of His hands. Never at any moment does Jehovah turn His thoughts from His beloved, even though He has the whole universe to rule. He says of His church, "I the Lord do keep it; I will water it every moment: lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day."

This truth, although it is easily spoken, is not readily comprehended in the fullness of its joy, nor is it always believed as it should be. These people in captivity were likely to fear that their God had forgotten them; hence the Lord repeats His words in this place, and speaks of thoughts and thinking three times. His words are so repeated as to seem almost redundant, out of a desire to make His people feel absolutely sure that not only did He act towards them, but that He still thought towards them. To the banished this would be a grand consolation. The Lord thought of them when they walked the strange streets of "the golden city," and heard a language which they understood not. He thought of them when they were buffeted as aliens by those who marched in the proudest pomp, and danced in cruel derision to the sound of their viols. The Lord thought of His exiles when their sole solace was solitude by the brink of the Babylonian canals, where among the willows they remembered Zion.

All that the Lord was doing towards them was done thoughtfully. His thoughts of peace, and not of evil, towards them, had suggested their captivity and the continuance of it for seventy years. If any of you are in trouble and sorrow today, do not doubt that this is sent you according to the thoughtful purpose of the Lord. It is in this fixed intent and thoughtfulness that the real character of an action lies. A person may happen to do you a good turn, but if you are sure that he did it by accident, or with no more thought than that wherewith a passing stranger throws a penny to a beggar, you are not impressed with gratitude. But when the action of your friend is the result of earnest deliberation, and you see that he acts in the tenderest regard to your welfare, you are far more thankful; traces of anxiety to do you good are very pleasant. Have I not heard persons say, "It was so kind and so thoughtful of him!" Do you not notice that men value kindly thought, and set great store by tender consideration! Remember, then, that there is never a thoughtless action on the part of God. His mind goes with His hand; His heart is in His acts. He thinks so much of His people, that the very hairs of their heads are all numbered, He thinks not only of the great thing, but of the little things which are incidental to the great thing, as the hairs are to the head. Every affliction is timed and measured, and every comfort is sent with a loving thoughtfulness which makes it precious in a sevenfold degree. O believer, the great thoughtfulness of the divine mind is exercised towards you, the chosen of the Lord. Never has anything happened to you as the result of a remorseless fate, but all your circumstances have been ordered in wisdom by a living, thoughtful, loving Lord.

Brethren, if I said no more you might go on your way rejoicing. Remember that the infinite God has thoughts of peace towards you, and your own thoughts will be thoughts of peace all the day.

To go a step further, let us next note that *the thoughts of God are only perfectly known to Himself*. It would be a mere truism for God to say, "I know the thoughts that I think toward you." Even a man usually knows his own thoughts, but the meaning is this; when *you* do not know the thoughts that I have towards you, yet *I* know them. Brethren, when we cannot know the thoughts of the Lord because they are too high for our conception, or too deep for our understanding, yet the Lord knows them. Our heavenly Father knows what He is doing, when His ways towards us appear to be involved and complicated,

and we cannot disentangle the threads of the skein, yet the Lord sees all things clearly, and knows the thoughts that He thinks towards us. He never misses His way, nor becomes embarrassed. We dare not profess to understand the ways of God to man; they are past finding out. Providence is a great deep. Its breadth exceeds the range of our vision, and its depth baffles our profoundest thought. "Your way, O Lord is in the sea, and Your path in the great waters, and Your footsteps are not known." When we are overwhelmed with wonder at what we see, we are humbled by the reminder, "Lo, these are parts of His ways; but how little a portion is heard of Him!" "Truly the things of God, knows no man, but the Spirit of God." God alone understands Himself and His thoughts. We stand by a powerful machine, and we see the wheels moving this way and that, but we do not understand its working. What does it matter? He, who made the engine and controls it, perfectly understands it, and this is practically the main concern, for it does not matter whether *we* understand the engine or not, it will work its purpose if he who has the control of it is at home with all its bands and wheels. Despite our ignorance, nothing can go wrong while the Lord in infinite knowledge rules over all. The child playing on the deck does not understand the tremendous engine whose beat is the throbbing heart of the stately Atlantic liner, and yet all is safe, for the engineer, the captain and the pilot are in their places, and well know what is being done. Let not the child trouble itself about things too great for it. Leave you the discovery of doubtful causes to Him whose understanding is infinite, and as for yourself, be you still, and know that Jehovah is God. Unbelief misinterprets the ways of God; hasty judgment jumps at wrong conclusions about them, but the Lord knows His own thoughts. We are doubtful where we ought to be sure, and we are sure where we have no ground for certainty, thus we are always in the wrong. How should it be otherwise with us, since vain man would be wise, and yet he is born like a wild ass's colt? We are hard to tame and to teach, but as for the Lord, "His way is perfect."—

*"His thoughts are high, His love is wise,
His wounds a cure intend;
And though He does not always smile,
He loves unto the end."*

Let us go a step further still; *The Lord would have us know that His thoughts toward us are settled and definite.* This is part of the intent of the words, "I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the Lord." Sometimes a man may hardly know his own thoughts, because he has scarcely made up his mind. There are several subjects now upon the public mind, concerning which it is wise to say little or nothing, because it is not easy to decide about them. Upon a certain matter one asks you this question, and another asks you another question, and it is possible that you have so carefully weighed and measured the arguments both *pro* and *con* that you cannot come to a conclusion either way. Your thoughts differ from day to day, and therefore you do not yet know them. You need not be ashamed of this; it shows that you have a just sense of your own imperfect knowledge. A fool soon makes up his mind, because there is so very little of it, but a wise man waits and considers. The case is far otherwise with the only wise God. The Lord is not a man that He should need to hesitate, His infinite mind is made up, and He knows His thoughts. With the Lord there is neither question nor debate, "He is in one mind, and none can turn Him." His purpose is settled, and He adheres to it. He is resolved to reward them that diligently seek Him, and to honor those that trust in Him. He is resolved to remember His covenant forever, and to keep His promises to those who believe Him. His thought is that the people whom He has formed for Himself shall show forth His praise. The Lord knows them that are His; He knows whom He gave to His Son, and He knows that these shall be His jewels forever and ever. Beloved, when you do not know your own mind, God knows *His* mind. Though you believe not, He abides faithful, when you are in the gloom, He is light, and in Him is no darkness at all. Your way may be closed, but His way is open. God knows all when you know nothing at all. When Moses came out of Egypt, he had no plan as to the march of Israel. He knew that he had to lead the children of Israel to the promised land, but that was all. He probably hoped to take them by the shortest cut to Palestine at once. Their journey was far otherwise, but it was all prearranged by the divine mind. It was by no error that the tribes were told to turn and encamp before Pihahiroth, between Migdol and the sea. The Lord knew that Pharaoh would say, "They are entangled in the land, the wilderness has shut them in." There was no going back, for the Egyptians were there, and no going forward, for the Red Sea was there, but the Lord had the way mapped out in His own

mind. He was not taken by surprise when the enemy said, "I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil," since for this purpose had He raised Pharaoh up, that He might show forth His power in him. The passage of the Red Sea was no hurried expedient; Jehovah knew what He would do. When our blessed Lord was surrounded by the hungry crowd, He asked His disciples, "How many loaves have you?" But "Jesus knew what He would do." He had His thoughts, and He knew them! "Known unto God are all His works from the beginning of the world." "Many, O Lord my God, are Your wonderful works which You have done, and Your thoughts which are toward us." You have said, "My counsel shall stand, and I will do all My pleasure," and it is even so. Brother, you do not know what is to be done, but the Lord knows for you. O, body of Christ, let your head think for you! O, servant of Christ, let your Master think for you. "I know," says God "the thoughts that I think toward you."

Now we have advanced some distance into the meaning of our text, and we are prepared to go a step further, namely, that *God's thoughts toward His people are always thoughts of peace*. He is at peace with them through the atoning blood of Jesus Christ. He regards them in Christ with perfect satisfaction. The Spirit of God speaks peace to their troubled conscience, and works in them the spirit of adoption and desires after holiness; thus the holy God is able to commune with them, and have thoughts of peace toward them. The Lord delights in them, He seeks their peace, He creates their peace, He sustains their peace, and thus all His thoughts toward them are peace. Note well the negative, which is expressly inserted. It is very sweet to my own heart. It might have appeared enough to say, "My thoughts are thoughts of peace." Yes, it would be quite sufficient when all things are bright with us, but those words, "and not of evil," are admirably adapted to keep off the goblins of the night, the vampires of suspicion which fly in the darkness. When under affliction we are sorely depressed, and when conscience perceives that there are reasons why the Lord should contend with us, then the enemy whispers, "The Lord has evil thoughts toward you, and will cast you off forever." No, beloved, His thoughts are *not of evil*. Though the Lord hates your sin, He does not hate you. Though He is the enemy of your follies, He is your own firm friend; yes, He is all the truer friend, because He fights against your faults.

He would have you pure and holy; therefore does He bathe you in the rivers, and baptize you in the fires. Not in anger does He afflict you, but in His dear covenant love. The hardest blow that He ever laid upon His child was inflicted by the hand of love. You may rise from your bed in the morning to be chastised, and before you fall asleep in the night you may smart under the rod, and yet be none the less, but all the more, the favorite of heaven; therefore, beloved, lay hold upon the negative, "not of evil." God has no evil thought towards His chosen; He has no desire to grieve us, but to save us.

There shall not a hair of your head perish, but yet that head may ache with weariness. It is for good, and only for good, that God thinks of us, and deals with us. Oh, that we could settle this in our hearts, and have done with dark forebodings! Though your way may now lie through dark ravines where the crags rise so steep above you as to shut out the light of day, yet press onward, for the way is safe. Follow the Lord, for where the road is rough, you will be less likely to slip than in more smooth and slippery places. If the way is steep, you will the sooner ascend on high, or if your way inclines downward, you will the sooner feel the needful humiliation, and the more readily cease from yourself, and cast yourself upon your Lord. Though I am not yet so old and grey-headed as many here present, yet one thing I know, that God has done unto me good, and not evil, all the days of my life, and I bear my public witness at this hour, that in very faithfulness He has afflicted me, and not one good thing has failed of all that He has promised me!

No, His thoughts are "not of evil." The next time the devil comes to you with a dark insinuation, tell him that the Lord's thoughts are "not of evil." Drive him away with that. When he hisses his foul suggestions, say, "Not of evil," God cannot have an evil thought towards His own elect. He that gave His own Son to die for us cannot think anything but good towards us!

Once more, and then we shall have fully compassed this text. *The Lord's thoughts are all working towards "an expected end,"* or, as the Revised Version has it, "to give you hope in your latter end." Some read it, "a future and a hope." The renderings are instructive. God is working with a motive. All things are working together for one objective, the good of those who love God. We see only the beginning; God saw the end from the beginning. We spell the alphabet out, Alpha, Beta, Gamma, but God reads all, from Alpha to Omega, at once. He knows every letter of the Book of Providence; He sees not

only what He is doing, but what will come of what He is doing. As to our present pain and grief, God saw not these things exclusively, but He saw the future joy and usefulness which will come of them. He regards not only the tearing up of the soil with the plow, but the clothing of that soil with the golden harvest. He sees the consequences of affliction, and He accounts those painful incidents to be blessed which lead up to so much of happiness. Let us comfort ourselves with this. God meant in Babylon to prepare a people that should know Him, of whom He could say, "I will be their God, and they shall be My people." At the end of seventy years, He would bring these people back to Jerusalem like a new race, who, whatever their faults might be, would never again fall into idolatry. He knew what He was driving at in their captivity, and in our case the Lord is equally clear as to His purpose. We do not ourselves know, for "it does not yet appear what we shall be." You have never seen the Great Artist's masterpiece, you have seen the rough marble, you have marked the chippings that fall on the ground, you have felt the edge of His chisel, you know the weight of His hammer, and you are full of the memory of these things, but oh, could you see that glorious image as it will be when He has put the finishing stroke to it, you would then understand the chisel, and the hammer, and the Worker better than you now do! O brethren, we would not know ourselves if we could see ourselves as we are to be when the Lord's purpose is accomplished upon us! We know that we shall be like Him when we shall see Him as He is, but what is He like "as He is"? What is that glory of the Lord which is to be ours? We can picture Him in His humiliation, but what is He like in His glory? He is the first-born and we are to be conformed to Him. God is working, working, working always to that end, and so all His thoughts tend towards this expected end.

Here I pause to make a practical application. I may be addressing some person here who is in great distress under conviction of sin. You despair because the Lord is bringing your sin to remembrance, but indeed, there is no cause; the Lord is sending you into captivity for a purpose. You are being shut up by the law that you may be set at liberty by Christ; you are being stripped in order that you may be clothed, and you are being emptied that you may be filled. If you could see the end from the beginning, you would rejoice that you are made to know the burden of sin, for so shall you be driven to the cross to find rest from your load. This sorrow shall be the death of your pride and self-righteousness. By this way the Lord is working out for you "a future and a hope." When clean divorced from self, you shall be wedded to Jesus, and dowried with His salvation.

I am also probably addressing many a child of God who is vexed in daily conflict with his inward corruption. Alas! We find the old man yet alive within us. The old nature in the Christian is no better than the old man in the sinner; it is the same carnal mind which is enmity against God, and is not reconciled, neither indeed can be. The new nature has a hard struggle to hold its own against this embodied death. We are, as it were, chained to a rotting carcass, and we cry, "O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me?" Now, do not despair because of this experience. It is better to mourn over imperfection than to be puffed up with the idle notion that there is no sin in you to be watched and conquered. Certain of the children of Israel remained with Zedekiah at Jerusalem, and boasted of their position, but they were none the better for their pretensions. You have been carried away into captivity, and you are sighing and crying because of indwelling sin, but the Lord's thoughts towards you are thoughts of peace, and not of evil, and He will "give you an expected end." You will come to true holiness by this painful process, and so shall you glorify God.

I may also be addressing some child of God in very deep trouble. Everything goes wrong with you, at home, in business, and perhaps in the church too. Very well, you will never have to raise that question, "How is it that I am not chastened?" That will never trouble you. Chastening for the present is not joyous; nevertheless afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness in them which are exercised thereby. Therefore gladly endure it. God's thoughts are towards you, for He is refining you; believe also that His thoughts are peaceable, and that He designs your highest good.

So far have I tried to justify the ways of God to men. May His own Spirit make you feel that the thoughts of the Lord are peace!

II. In the second part of my discourse I would ask you to CONSIDER THE PROPER ATTITUDE OF GOD'S PEOPLE TOWARDS THEIR LORD.

You will all agree with me when I say that *our attitude should be that of submission*. If God, in all that He does towards us, is acting with an objective and that objective a loving one, then let Him do what seems good to Him. Henceforth let us have no quarrel with the God of Providence, but let us say, "Your will be done." Who would not yield to that which works his health, his wealth, his boundless happiness? "My son, despise not you the chastening of the Lord, or faint when you are rebuked by Him: for whom the Lord loves, He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives."

Next, let our position be one of *great hopefulness*, seeing the end of God, in all He does, is to give us "a future and a hope." We are not driven into growing darkness, but led into increasing light. There is always something to be hoped for in the Christian's life. Let us not look towards the future nor regard the present with any kind of dread. There is nothing for us to dread—

*"If sin is pardoned, I'm secure;
Death has no sting beside;
The law gave sin its damning power,
But Christ, my ransom, died."*

The death of Christ is the death of evil to the child of God. Let us trust and not be afraid. Let us not be content with sullenly making up our minds to stoical endurance. We must not only bear the will of the Lord, but rejoice in it. It is a blessed thing when we come to rejoice in tribulations, and to glory in infirmities. It is fine music when we can sing, "Sweet affliction."

"Hard work," says one. Yes, but it is worth the pains, for it secures perfect peace. If your will is brought to your circumstances, and if, better still, your will is brought to delight in God's will, then the fangs of the serpent are extracted. The sorrow is sucked out of the sorrow by the lips of acquiescence. When you can say, "Not my will, but Yours be done," you shall have your will. There is always something "better on before" for those who believe in Jesus. Be you sure of that—

*"You fearful saints, fresh courage take,
The clouds you so much dread
Are big with mercy, and shall break
With blessings on your head."*

Welcome clouds, if showers of mercy are to come of them. God forbid we should always have sunshine, for that would mean drought. Let the clouds come if they bring a blessed rain.

Our relation to God should, next, be one of *continual expectancy*, especially expectancy of the fulfillment of His promises. I call your attention again to the tenth verse, "I will perform My good word toward you." I do so love that expression, we must have it for a text one of these days, "I will perform My good word toward you." His promises are good words; good indeed, and sweetly refreshing. When your hearts are faint then is the promise emphatically *good*. Expect the Lord to be as good as His good Word.

Brethren, do not heap up to yourselves sorrow, as some do in these days, by expecting that which the Lord has not promised. I earnestly warn you against those who have been led by a fevered imagination to expect, first, perfection in the flesh, and then perfection of the flesh, and then an actual immortality for the flesh. God will fulfill His promise, but He will not fulfill your misreading of it. I should not wonder if there should arise a race of people who will believe that they can live without eating, because it is said, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God shall man live." If healed without medicine, why not fed without food? What absolute need of any visible means when God can work without them? Those who think it needful to lay aside all outward means in order to a true faith in God are on the way to any absurdity. Truly, if God had bidden me live without eating, I would fast at His command, and expect to live, but as He has not done so, I shall not presume. Faith that is not warranted by the word of God is not faith, but folly, and folly is not the faith of God's elect. The Lord will perform His own word, but He will not perform the delirious declarations of madmen. If it needs a million miracles to fulfill God's promises they shall be forthcoming, but we are not anxious for miracles, because our larger faith believes that the Lord can overrule the ordinary ways of providence to perform His good word, and bring us the expected end.

Again, beloved, our position towards God should be one of *happy hope as to blessed ends being answered even now*. In the twenty-fourth chapter we observe one of the ends of the Lord's sending His

people into exile. I noticed in the fifth verse that the Lord said, "So will I acknowledge them that are carried away captive of Judah." Their sorrow would bring about *the Lord's acknowledgment of them*. Thus do we, brethren, bear in our body the marks of the Lord Jesus. Affliction is the seal of the Lord's election. I remember a story of Mr. Mack, who was a Baptist minister in Northamptonshire. In his youth he was a soldier, and calling on Robert Hall, when his regiment marched through Leicester, that great man became interested in him, and procured his release from the ranks. When he went to preach in Glasgow, he sought out his aged mother, whom he had not seen for many years. He knew his mother the moment he saw her, but the old lady did not recognize her son. It so happened that when he was a child, his mother had accidentally wounded his wrist with a knife. To comfort him she cried, "Never mind, my bonnie bairn, your mither will ken you by that when you are a man." When Mack's mother would not believe that a grave, fine-looking minister could be her own child, he turned up his sleeve and cried, "Mither, mither, dinna you ken *that*?" In a moment they were in each other's arms. Ah, brethren! The Lord knows the spot of His children. He acknowledges them by the mark of correction. What God is doing to us in the way of trouble and trial is but His acknowledgment of us as true heirs, and the marks of His rod shall be our proof that we are not bastards, but true sons. He knows the wounds He made when He was exercising His sacred surgery upon us. By this also shall you yourself be made to know that verily you are a piece of gold, or else you would not have been put into the furnace. This will be one "expected end" of the Lord towards us; let us rejoice in it.

God's dealings with us work out *our good in every way*. The Lord said (Jer 24:5), "I have sent them out of this place into the land of the Chaldeans for their good." We know that "All things work together for good to them that love God." Thus from day to day the Lord gives us "an expected end."

In the twelfth verse of the chapter from which we have taken our text, we see that *prayer is quickened* by the Lord's work towards them. "Then shall you call upon Me." Our troubles drive us to our knees. If it had not been for Esau, Jacob had never wrestled at Jabbok. I hope we usually go to our closets of our own accord, but often we are whipped there. Many of the most earnest prayers that ever rise to heaven come from us when we are in bondage under grief. Yes, yes, we must thank God that His trying ways with us have produced in us a prayerful spirit, and a full conviction that we do not pray in vain.

The Lord's end with us is also *our sanctification*. "And I will give them a heart to know Me, that I am the Lord: and they shall be My people, and I will be their God: for they shall return unto Me with their whole heart." See the value of sanctified afflictions! God grant that from day to day we may feel the expected ends of His corrections! O that we may *grow in grace*, and may *our graces grow*! May we increase in faith, and hope, and love, and patience, and courage, and joy! Surely our knowledge ought to widen out, our consecration should be confirmed, our insight should be clearer, our outlook steadier. We ought by all our experience to become more Christ-like, better reflectors of the heavenly light, fitter temples of the Holy Spirit. Therefore let us be of good cheer, and rejoice that from day to day we receive the end of our faith, the salvation of our souls, and thus the Lord's end is being answered.

But to close. We have kept the best wine until now. The thoughts of God towards us are that He will give us "an expected end." *An end*; there is good cheer in that. We do not wish to remain here forever. We would be diligent in running the race, but we long for the end of it. I should be satisfied to preach here throughout all eternity if I might always bring glory to God, but yet I am glad that there is to be an end of preaching, and a season of pure praise. You, my brethren, love the Lord's work, but still you look forward to the time when you shall take your wage, and have done. It is a comfort that there is an end.

Blessed be God, *it is an expected end*. You ungodly people can only look forward to a *dreaded end*; an end of your foolish mirth, an end of your carelessness, an end of your boasting. You fear your end. But God will give His people an *expected* end. Suppose that end should be the coming of Christ! Oh, how we long for it! Oh that the Bridegroom would now appear! Oh that He would descend from heaven with a shout, and gather His chosen from the four winds of heaven! "Even so, come quickly!" That is our *expected end*.

If our Lord does not come, and we must be taken home by death, we feel no alarm in looking forward to that expected end. One by one our dear friends go home from this church. As I have often told you, there is never a week without some of our number being taken up. Although I have visited a large number of dying believers, I have never yet visited a member of this church who has expressed the least

fear in their dying moments, or the slightest dismay in the hour of departure. It makes me feel happy to see how the brethren and sisters die; they pass away as if they were going to a wedding rather than to a tomb—as if it were the most joyful thing that ever happened to them to have reached their expected end. Doubts are all driven away when you see how believers die. Grace is given them, so that they surmount the weakness of the hour. The Lord Jesus in them triumphs over pain and death. Our venerable brother and elder, Mr. Court, who has just passed away at a great age, looked forward to his departure with peaceful hope. He used to speak of it as of a thing from which he had no shrinking. There was no discontent or murmuring about him; no feverish eagerness to quit the infirmities of this life, but, on the other hand, a happy foresight of his end, and a joyful expectation of it. Some of the Lord's saints have not yet received dying grace, but then they are not going to die yet. Brethren, saints are prepared to go before they go. Our Lord does not pluck His fruit unwisely. Foolish people may tear the green apples from the tree with a pull and a wrench, and bruise them as they throw them into the basket, but our Lord values His fruit, and so He waits until it is quite ripe, and then He gathers it tenderly. When He puts forth His hand, the fruit bows down to it, and parts from the bough without a strain. When the believer comes to die, it will not be to an end which he feared, but to an end which he expected.

Brethren, when death is past, then comes that expected end which shall never end. What will the first five minutes in heaven be? There is a bigger question; what will thousands of years in heaven be? What will myriads of ages be? My disembodied spirit will at the first be perfectly happy in the embraces of my Lord, but in due time the resurrection day will dawn, and this body may rise again in full glory. Then there will be a re-marriage of soul and body, and we shall be perfected, even as our risen Lord. Oh, the glory of that expected end!

What will it be when our completed manhood shall be introduced to the society of angels, to the presence of cherubim and seraphim? What will it be to see Him whom we have loved so long? What to hear Him say, "Come, you blessed of My Father"? What joy to sit at His right hand! Yesterday my heart was ravished with that text, "They cast their crowns before the throne." If ever I am privileged to have a crown at all, how gladly will I lay it down at the feet of my Lord! Is not this your mind? How sweetly will we sing, *Non nobis, Domine!* "Not unto us, O Lord, but unto Your name give glory." Brethren, what singing it will be when we shall be loosened from the deadening influence of the flesh! How will we praise when we have done with these tongues of clay, which hamper us so much! I would speak greatly to my Lord's praise, but I fail. Strip me of this house of clay, and I will sing as sweetly as any of the birds of paradise that carol forever in the Tree of Life above. Do you not feel a longing to be up and away? Indulge those longings, for thus you will be drawn nearer to the understanding of the text—"to give you an expected end." All that you are suffering, all that you are enjoying, all that God sends you, has this one design, to make you fit to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.

Ending this discourse, I would ask you to pledge that you will meet me where glory dwells, in Emmanuel's land. We shall soon be with the angels. The Lord is thinking of us, and He is expecting us home. Our Lord Jesus is waiting for His wedding day, which is His expected end. "My soul, wait you only upon God, for my expectation is from Him."

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—JEREMIAH 24, 29.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—737, 734, 746.

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